



IGNITING CHANGE & KINDLING RESILIENCE, ONE SPARK AT A TIME.

Testimony in Support of SB 459: Grant Applications and Reporting - Maryland Efficient Grant Application Council – Alterations

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Senate Budget and Taxation Committee

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Chair Guy Guzzone, Vice Chair Rosapepe and honorable members of the Budget and Taxation Committee, I am writing as a partner in SparkFFS, a consulting firm to nonprofits, and also as a long-time nonprofit professional, to support Senate Bill 459, Grant Applications and Reporting - Maryland Efficient Grant Application Council – Alterations.

The state has made efforts to improve grants processing, including the prompt payment legislation passed last year, but there is still much to be done to ensure that the partnership between nonprofits and the state runs smoothly and efficiently. Maryland benefits enormously from the thousands of nonprofits that provide a wide range of services to residents. State grant processes are overly cumbersome, payment is often delayed by months, and there is no one in the administration consistently responding to problems as they arise.

This bill has several provisions that will take important steps towards a more effective partnership between the state and nonprofits. It will extend the life of the Maryland Efficient Grant Application Council which has focused on developing recommendations for a standardized structure for state grants documents and processing, which is generally consistent with federal grants standards. The Council's work was interrupted by the pandemic and weakened by lack of staffing during the last administration, and it should be renewed. Furthermore, the bill would add the Comptroller and Legislative Auditor to the Council, adding their expertise and their influence to the recommendations the Council produces.

Equally important, the bill would charge the Council to make recommendations for the creation of a state grants ombudsperson to provide assistance with state grant programs, help resolve delays in the grant-making process, and collect and disseminate information on opportunities for grants from federal, state and local governments. Creation of this position would make a difference to nonprofits in their everyday dealings with the state while we collectively work to reform the grants process.



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It benefits all the residents of Maryland when nonprofits are supported to do the work of assisting the most vulnerable residents, while also enriching life by providing arts and cultural opportunities, recreation, environmental protection, and a myriad of other valuable services.

For all these reasons, SparkFFS requests a favorable report on SB 459.

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